

**Listing of Claims:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listing, of claims in the application.

1. (Currently Amended) A method of conducting a wagering base game comprising:  
receiving a wager from a player to play the wagering base game;  
~~detecting a winning outcome to the wagering base game, the winning outcome~~  
~~resulting in winning credits;~~  
determining an outcome to the wagering base game;  
concealing, from the player, the outcome to the wagering base game and an outcome  
pay out associated with the outcome;  
displaying, to the player, a keep pay option on a video display without showing the  
outcome and the outcome pay out;  
displaying, to the player, providing a first award option on the video display of the  
gaming machine to a player of the wagering base game, the first award option displayed on a  
video display of the gaming machine; and  
receiving, from the player, a selection of either the keep pay option or the first award  
option, the selection of the keep pay option awarding the player the outcome pay out and  
precluding the player from receiving the first award option, and the selection of the first  
award option awarding the player the first award option and precluding the player from  
receiving the outcome pay out.  
~~in response to the first award option being exercised by the player, precluding the~~  
~~player from receiving the winning credits and awarding the first award option to the player.~~
2. (Original) The method of conducting the wagering base game of claim 1, wherein the gaming machine is a video slot machine, and wherein the first award option comprises at least one free reel spin.
3. (Original) The method of conducting the wagering base game of claim 1, wherein the first award option comprises base game play not requiring a wager.
4. (Original) The method of conducting the wagering base game of claim 3, wherein the first award option further comprises an occurrence of a multiplied winning outcome associated with the base game play not requiring a wager.

5. (Original) The method of conducting the wagering base game of claim 3, wherein the first award option further comprises a credit amount.

6. (Original) The method of conducting the wagering base game of claim 3, wherein the first award option further comprises an occurrence of at least one enhanced symbol associated with the base game play not requiring a wager.

7. (Currently Amended) The method of conducting the wagering base game of claim 1, wherein providing the first award option comprises:

~~displaying a keep pay option on the video display, wherein selection of the keep pay option allows the player to keep the winning credits and precludes the player from exercising the first award option;~~

displaying an animated character on the video display, the animated character appearing to give verbal instructions to the player; and

displaying an option award meter on the video display, the option award meter providing a visual indication of a first award option value.

8. (Original) The method of conducting the wagering base game of claim 7, wherein the option award meter comprises a circular disk having a plurality of colored wedges and a rotatable pointer, each of the plurality of colored wedges associated with a different value, the rotatable pointer indicating one of the plurality of colored wedges.

9. (Original) The method of conducting the wagering base game of claim 1, wherein in response to the first award option not being exercised by the player, providing a second award option, the second award option replacing the first award option, the second award option more valuable to the player than the first award option.

10. (Original) The method of conducting the wagering base game of claim 1, wherein the first award option comprises an occurrence a bonus game.

11. (Original) The method of conducting the wagering base game of claim 10, wherein the bonus game comprises:

providing a plurality of pick tiles on the video display, each of the plurality of pick tiles associated with a hidden credit award;

detecting player selection of a first pick tile of the plurality of pick tiles, player selection of the first pick tile revealing a first credit award to the player;

providing a first bonus award option to the player; and  
in response to the first bonus award option being exercised by the player, precluding the player from receiving the first credit award and awarding the first bonus award option to the player.

12. (Original) The method of conducting the wagering base game of claim 11, wherein the first bonus award option comprises bonus award credits, the bonus award credits being greater than the first credit award.

13. (Original) The method of conducting the wagering base game of claim 11, further comprising precluding the player from selecting a second pick tile of the plurality of pick tiles in response to the first bonus award option being exercised by the player.

14. (Original) The method of conducting the wagering base game of claim 13, wherein in response to the first bonus award option not being exercised by the player, enabling player selection of the second pick tile, the second pick tile associated with a second credit award.

15. (Original) The method of conducting the wagering base game of claim 14, further comprising:

detecting player selection of the second pick tile;  
displaying a sum of the first credit award and the second credit award on the video display;  
providing a second bonus award option to the player; in response to the second bonus award option being exercised by the player, precluding the player from receiving the sum of the first credit award and the second credit award and awarding the second bonus award option to the player; and  
precluding the player from selecting a third pick tile of the plurality of pick tiles.

16. (Original) The method of conducting the wagering base game of claim 14, further comprising awarding the sum of the first credit award and the second credit award to the player if the second pick tile comprises a collect pick tile, the collect pick tile indicating an end to bonus game play.

17. (Currently Amended) A method of conducting a wagering base game comprising:  
receiving a wager to play the wagering base game;  
determining an outcome to the wagering base game;

concealing from the player [[an]] the outcome to the wagering base game;  
providing a first award option to the player, the first award option displayed on a video display of the gaming machine; and  
in response to the first award option being exercised by the player, precluding the player from receiving winning credits associated with the outcome and awarding the first award option to the player.

18. (Original) The method of conducting a wagering base game of claim 17, wherein the first award option comprises base game play not requiring a wager.

19. (Original) The method of conducting a wagering base game of claim 17, wherein the first award option comprises first award credits.

20. (Original) The method of conducting the wagering base game of claim 17, wherein providing the first award option comprises:

displaying a keep pay option on the video display, wherein player selection of the keep pay option allows the player to keep winning credits associated with the outcome and precludes the player from exercising the first award option;

displaying an animated character on the video display, the animated character appearing to give verbal instructions to the player; and

displaying an option award meter on the video display, the option award meter providing a visual indication of a first award option value.

21. (Original) The method of conducting a wagering game of claim 17, wherein in response to the first award option not being exercised by the player, providing a second award option, the second award option more valuable to the player than the first award option.

22. (Original) The method of conducting a wagering base game of claim 21, wherein the second award option comprises second award credits, the second award credits greater than the first award credits.

23. (Currently Amended) A gaming machine for conducting a wagering base game, the gaming machine comprising:

a value input device;

a video display for displaying video images associated with the wagering base game; and a controller operatively coupled to the value input device and the video display, the controller comprising a processor and a memory coupled to the processor, the controller being programmed to:

receive from a player a wager to play the wagering base game,  
~~detect a winning outcome to the wagering base game, the winning outcome resulting in winning credits,~~  
determine an outcome to the wagering base game;  
conceal, from the player, at least a portion of the outcome of the wagering base game;  
display, to the player, a keep pay option on a video display without showing the at least a portion of the outcome;  
~~display, to the player, provide a first award option on the video display of the gaming machine to a player of the wagering base game, the first award option displayed on a video display of the gaming machine; and~~  
receive, from the player, a selection of either the keep pay option or the first award option, the selection of the keep pay option precluding the player from receiving the first award option, and the selection of the first award option precluding the player from receiving an outcome pay out.  
~~in response to the first award option being exercised by the player, preclude the player from receiving the winning credits and awarding the first award option to the player.~~

24. (Original) The gaming machine of claim 23, wherein the gaming machine is a video slot machine, and wherein the first award option comprises at least one free reel spin.

25. (Original) The gaming machine of claim 23, wherein the first award option comprises base game play not requiring a wager.

26. (Original) The gaming machine of claim 25, wherein the first award option further comprises an occurrence of a multiplied winning outcome associated with the base game play not requiring a wager.

27. (Original) The gaming machine of claim 25, wherein the first award option further comprises a credit amount.

28. (Original) The gaming machine of claim 25, wherein the first award option further comprises an occurrence of at least one enhanced symbol associated with the base game play not requiring a wager.

29. (Currently Amended) The gaming machine of claim 23, wherein the controller is further programmed to:

~~display a keep pay option on the video display, wherein player selection of the keep pay option allows the player to keep the winning credits and precludes the player from exercising the first award option;~~

display an animated character on the video display, the animated character appearing to give verbal instructions to the player; and

display an option award meter on the video display, the option award meter providing a visual indication of a first award option value.

30. (New) The method of conducting a wagering base game of claim 1, wherein the first award option is more valuable than the outcome pay out.

31. (New) The method of conducting a wagering base game of claim 28, wherein the outcome pay out comprises outcome credits and the first award option comprises first award credits, the first award credits being greater than the outcome credits.

32. (New) The method of conducting a wagering base game of claim 28, wherein the outcome is a non-winning outcome and the outcome pay out has no value.

33. (New) The method of conducting a wagering base game of claim 1, wherein the outcome pay out is more valuable than the first award option.

34. (New) The method of conducting a wagering base game of claim 31, wherein the outcome pay out comprises outcome credits and the first award option comprises first award credits, the outcome credits being greater than the first award credits.

35. (New) The method of conducting a wagering base game of claim 1, further comprising displaying the outcome and the outcome pay out to the player after the step of receiving a selection from the player.